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READER PREFERENCES NO LONGER A MYSTERY

For Immediate Release:

CHICAGO - October 2006 -- Are male readers likely to pick up a book written by a female author?

Yes, says a recent survey conducted by Sisters in Crime (SinC), a worldwide not-for-profit organization that provides networking, advice and support to female mystery writers and their fans. The survey, administered by a third-party survey services firm, confirms that neither men nor women have a preference when it comes to the gender of the author.

“These results should serve as a wake-up call to the publishing industry,” says Rochelle Krich, president of SinC and an award-winning novelist. “It effectively dispels the perception that male readers read books primarily by male authors. Book sellers and publishers are missing a business opportunity by not marketing female authors to male readers.”

Sisters in Crime surveyed 234 individuals between the ages of 25 and 65. Of the participants, 56 percent were male and 44 percent were female.

SinC found that 93 percent of survey respondents have no preference for books written by men or women, regardless of genre or reader gender.

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Other notable results from the reader survey were:

- Respondents believed that male and female authors wrote equally graphic and realistic novels.
- Crime fiction was the second most read genre of books, next to non-fiction.
- 61 percent said that a recommendation from a family member, friend or colleague is the most important factor in the decision to read. Book reviews, in comparison, have little or no impact.
- More than 85 percent of those surveyed have read a book in the past month; however, overall readership is down almost 25 percent compared with the previous year.
- Only 30 percent of those surveyed attend book signings; however, 62 percent of people who attend will purchase the book

“These results are very encouraging,” says Krich. “With more marketing support, female crime fiction authors can reach the male *and* female readers who are eager to find them.”

Independent and big box booksellers, such as Kate’s Mystery Books in Cambridge, Mass., and Borders, have taken notice. Owner Kate Mattes says, “Our readers demand quality fiction. It makes good business sense to stock our shelves with the best work - regardless of the author’s gender.”

At least one big box bookseller agrees.

“Borders believes female authors in the Mystery & Thriller genre are critical to the popularity and success of the category as a whole,” responded Bill Adams, Mystery/Thriller buyer for Borders Superstore. “We felt it was important to recognize the contributions of female authors and the Sisters in Crime authors in particular by featuring a display of their bestselling titles during the month of September to help celebrate their 20th anniversary.”

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SinC also conducts a quarterly monitoring project to track book reviews. In the first quarter of 2006, the research found that men wrote two out of every three books reviewed in the 15 top metropolitan literary sections, even though women write half of all crime fiction.

A group of mystery writers founded SinC in 1986 to overcome the inequities faced by female authors. About one third of SinC members are published authors, including best-selling novelists Sara Paretsky, Mary Higgins Clark, Tess Gerritson, Libby Fischer Hellmann, Krich, among others. Sisters in Crime's mission is to combat discrimination against women in the mystery field, educate publishers and the general public as to the inequities in the treatment of female authors, raise the level of awareness of their contributions to the field and promote the professional advancement of women who write mysteries.

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